Moving a mock conference online - a case study  
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What  
In the late hours of Thursday 12 March 2020 the Faculty of Arts and Philosophy at Ghent University decided to move all classes and classroom activities online as of Friday 13 March in an attempt to slow the spread of COVID-19. At the Postgraduate Programme for Conference Interpreting we had a mock conference planned for Wednesday 18 March.

Participants:  
- 5 students  
- 9 members of staff.

Languages:  
A Dutch  
B German, French, English  
C German, French, English, Spanish

Main challenge  
The main challenge was to find a way to listen to source and target for simultaneous. To achieve this we used two separate devices and two separate headsets per trainer (1 laptop, 1 smartphone) and two online tools.
How
We mimicked an online version of our Televic interpretation lab by using two online tools, Zoom and Discord.

Hardware requirements for trainers
- 1 laptop with headset and microphone
- 1 smartphone (or tablet or second laptop) with headset

Hardware requirements for students
- 1 laptop with headset and microphone

Software requirements for all participants
- Zoom
- Discord

Setup
We used Zoom for the Floor. One of the interpreter trainers brought a speech just as they would during our mock conference in the classroom.

Consecutive
For consecutive interpreting, we used Zoom to deliver the speech and listen to the student’s rendition, just like in a standard classroom exercise. One could also use the Zoom Breakout Rooms feature for students practising in parallel sessions. For consecutive Discord is not required.
Simultaneous
For simultaneous interpreting, we again used Zoom for the Floor. The interpretation channels were available through the voice channels on Discord. We set up voice channels or “booths” for the shared A-language NL (one per student for clarity’s sake and facilitating switching by trainers) and for the B-languages English, French and German.

The trainers need two devices, one for Zoom (floor) and one for Discord (interpretation channels), to separate the two audio channels. With this setup, our trainers were able to recreate the conditions in our Televic interpretation lab: source in one ear and the student rendition in the other.
**Vulnerabilities**

**Hardware**
- While standard smartphone headsets worked, it is advisable to invest in a quality headset with microphone.
- While a good Wi-Fi-connection might be sufficient, it is advisable to connect to the internet through an Ethernet connection.

**Microphone hygiene**
As in traditional meetings and classroom activities, microphone hygiene is crucial. In Zoom only the speaker's microphone should be on. All students and staff should mute their microphone in Zoom. In Discord, students switch their microphones on. Trainers should mute their microphone in Discord while listening to the interpretation. Discord does not allow two microphones to be open at the same time. This means it cuts off one microphone when the microphone of another user picks up any sound (such as background noises). Trainers should unmute afterwards to give verbal feedback. Individual feedback can also be shared verbally in Zoom Breakout Rooms or in writing (collectively or privately) through the Zoom or Discord chatrooms.